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ICC Docket No. 06-0706
IL 71 Resistors 1-1
Errata Workpapers #14
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USFWS/DNR/Ameren Project Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: August 21, 2006

**Meeting Place: Ameren CILCO
Peoria, IL**

Purpose: Indiana Bat Consultation, N. LaSalle-Fox River-Ottawa Proposed 138kv Transmission

Attendees: See attached

- Meeting began at 11:00 AM with introductions. Jeff Kraemer distributed maps illustrating the Indiana bat habitat areas along the entire route, the alternative routes from N. LaSalle to I80, and the habitat types/qualities within the alternative routes.
- Roger Nelson presented an overview of the need for the proposed transmission loop.
- Doug presented a description and sketch of the general structure composition to address Jody's question.
- Jeff provided a description of the aerial identified bat habitats and a description of the different alternatives from LaSalle to I80.
- Terry provided an overview of the methodology used to field assess bat habitat and presented the results of field surveys within areas that we had access to.
- Dennis presented a description of construction issues within the Ill Cement property. He indicated that it is very difficult to predict the stability of the soils since the native soils have been removed and fill material is now present. He indicated that soil borings will be necessary to determine depth to bedrock and soil composition. Dennis stated that it would be better to install the poles within the native soils which are located within the wooded portions of the property.
- Joe Kath presented his knowledge of Indiana bat usage in the project vicinity and the IDNR's position on impacts that may result to the bats from this project.
 - LaSalle County is primarily only used for winter habitat (Blackball Mine Hibernacula)
 - Blackball Mine supports a very low wintering population of Indian bats (average – 1,200) compared to other hibernacula such as one in southern Illinois which supports 30,000+ annually.
 - There are no records of Indiana bat maternity colonies in LaSalle County and no Indiana bats have been found outside of Blackball mine during the summer season in LaSalle County.
 - Summer surveys have been conducted along the Little Vermillion River (LVR) in LaSalle County on a number of occasions and no Indiana bats have been recorded. The LVR corridor was surveyed as part of an Illinois Natural History Survey study during the

summer period between 1985-1994. He is aware of other surveys that were conducted in LaSalle County within the last 5 years but was not sure where they were conducted.

- Joe referenced a study where several bats wintering in the Blackball Mine were banded. Only three of the bats were recovered and all three those bats left the state during the summer (they were found in Iowa, Indiana, and Missouri). This study is referenced in the 1999 draft recovery plan.
 - In general, brooding habitat in LaSalle County, in particular the project area, is very marginal. The majority of the area is comprised of agricultural land and urban areas with small isolated woodland areas (in a landscape context). These isolated habitat patches are not typically utilized or preferred by maternity colonies. S. Illinois, which has much larger bat populations is a different story and contains large, unfragmented forested areas with suitable habitat.
 - If there are Indiana bats summering in the LaSalle County, they would most likely be found south of the hibernacula in the Starved Rock State Park. This area contains a fairly large, less fragmented forested habitat.
 - Indiana bats do not utilize a 5 mile area around the hibernacula during the swarming period. They are restricted to swarming around the entrance to the mine. Foraging is not a primary focus during this period, the focus is mating. Habitat quality decreases substantially further away from the mine, especially north. There is no reason for the bats to venture away from the mine entrances during this period.
 - Male bachelor bats unlikely utilize the LVR corridor for foraging during the summer or they would have caught one by now.
 - Joe stated with certainty that this project, regardless of which of the alternative routes is chosen there will not be any impacts on Indiana bats or their habitat. He was more concerned with the impacts that may result from further fragmentation of the LVR corridor and was not in favor of the current primary route because of this impact.
 - Joe would support either the SM route if the transmission line could go over the top of the wooded portion of LVR corridor and would also support a modification of the SG route that avoids tree clearing along the LVR corridor. He was not concerned with tree clearing within other portions of the SG route where marginal and/or moderate bat habitat was identified.
- Joe Kath was asked to provide his input on relevance and need for mist net surveys of the Indiana Bat within the proposed 100' ROW.
 - Surveys during the swarming period would be a waste of time and resources. As stated previously the bats stay close to the mine entrance and a survey during this period would not provide any relevant information.
 - Joe indicated that the 5-mile buffer around hibernaculum is used for protecting summer habitat not swarming habitat and is more relevant to mines such as the ones in S. Illinois - Kristen Lundh agreed with this.
 - Joe also thought that summer surveys would not be warranted given the fact we would only have access to survey within a 100' width. Joe pointed out that 3 survey events are recommended for determining presence/absence. However, whether or not you actually

- catch bats depends on if you are there for the right 3 days. And given the limitations of surveying only within a 100' width, the surveys would not provide useful information.
- However, if Ameren proposed to clear trees within highly suitable habitat, Joe would still recommend surveys are conducted in the case a lawsuit arises.
 - USFWS provided a summary of the informational needs that they will require for reviewing and providing a biological opinion about the project.
 - Kristen indicated that a biological assessment (BA) will be required for this project because there is a potential for an effect on the Indiana bat because of the proximity to the hibernacula and the fact there is suitable habitat within the project area.
 - Kristen clarified that we are involved in only informal consultation at this point. Formal consultation only begins if the USFWS determines that an effect on the species may result from the project. This can not be determined until a biological assessment is completed.
 - The BA shall include an effects analysis, best available scientific data, and description of habitat areas based on field surveys.
 - Jody Millar stated that we know Indiana bats utilize the mine but not positive they don't utilize the project area. She thought that bat surveys are warranted.
 - Joe interjected that he disagreed. There is survey information and scientific documentation available that supports his opinion that bats do not utilize the area for summer habitat and swarming habitat is not an issue. Both Jody and Kristen conceded to Joe's opinion that surveys would only be needed if tree clearing is proposed in highly suitable habitat patches.
 - Jeff asked for clarification and consensus (b/n IDNR/USFWS) that bat surveys would not be needed during the swarming period since they would need to be conducted this fall, otherwise we would need to wait until the fall of 2007. Both USFWS and IDNR agreed that swarming season surveys are not necessary.
 - Kristen wants us to find out exactly where and when any surveys were conducted in LaSalle County to include in the BA.
 - Kristen indicated that the USFWS has 45 days to review a biological assessment. Within that time period they will decide if there is "likely no effect" or "potential effect" on the species. If likely no effect is determined no further information is needed. If potential effect is determined either more information is needed to support a no effect conclusion or we enter into formal consultation to determine magnitude of an effect.
 - Kristen indicated that based on the information that Joe has provided, existing scientific information, and the limited tree clearing needed for this project the biological assessment should lead to a favorable conclusion.
 - Jeff asked if a habitat conservation plan (HCP) will be needed in the BA. Joe and Kristen stated that a full HCP is not recommended or needed but a minor HCP is useful for addressing construction mitigation and impact minimization.

- Lyle and Doug pointed out that the Little Vermillion View development was located adjacent to one of the proposed routes. Rick indicated that he did not believe IDNR was consulted for the development. He stated that if they conducted tree clearing within bat habitat that they are in violation of state law and those lots or lands may need to be placed into a conservation area.
- A modified version of the SG route that avoided tree clearing in highly suitable habitat areas was drafted by Ameren, Realtime, and NRC following the meeting that would avoid the need for bat surveys.

USFWS/IDNR/AMEREN MEETING

ATTENDANCE LIST

Monday, August 21, 2006
 Ameren CILCO
 Peoria, IL

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